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195x The seven principal deities of the Georgian pantheon were associated with the cult of the Sun, the Moon and the five planets and the worship of Kartlos-Teshub-Armazi, the national god in his various transformations, continued to hold the subconscious religious mind of the Georgians throughout the whole period of Christianity. St. George was the Cappadocian successor of the Hittite Teshub, and in Georgia the Christian Saints George and Elias retained many of the attributes accorded in pagan times to the solar-lunar deities Kartlos-Armazi and Zadeni. Wesendonk has noted that on the Georgian representations of St. George are the Sun, the Moon and the five stars, which nowhere else occur, while Javakhishvili has pointed out that in the worship of St. George pagan features exist, and that St. George is in reality a Moon-god. Seven was a significant and often sacred figure in Georgia, and in the Middle Ages the Seven Heavenly Bodies symbolized the seven parts of the Georgian Kingdom. But while sun- and moon-worship may be native to Georgia, it is probable that the worship of the five planets and the sanctity of the number seven indicate early Mesopotamian influences upon the native cults.

Wesendonk has suggested that the Cappadocian St. George became identified with the Georgian solar-lunar deity at the period of the introduction of Christianity into Georgia under influences from Syria. He continued to be associated with the Seven Heavenly Bodies and he was worshipped as the older gods Armazi and Zadeni had been, most often on mountain-tops and heights.

776 173 St. George holds the supreme place in the devout heart of the Georgian peasant, and he is reckoned even before Christ. Javakhishvili has observed that in the folk-lore of the people, St. George, and not Christ, is considered as the more important being, and he is regarded as the first in rank and the greater god. He is the protector of the human hearth, and of shepherds, and he guards man and beast and crops against the destructive forces of nature, even against the caprices and the evil humour of God. Only a second place is accorded to Christ. The Khevsurs address St. George in the words "*Oh God, thou Holy George.*" The Svanians respect St. George more than the Creator and consider him as more powerful than God. The *Khatoba*, the great feast of St. George, in August, is made to fall on the night of the full moon, and the ceremonies connected with the nocturnal celebration are none other than the pagan rites of

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moon-worship. Finally, the association of St. George with the dragon, so common on the religious objects surviving from the Caucasian Bronze Age and with the horse which recalls the Scythian totem or indeed the white horse of Mithra, affirms that mediæval Georgian Christianity was compounded of a mass of obscure pagan traditions derived from the remotest spiritual experiences of the people.[1]

Beside the two great deities Armazi and Zadeni, and the lesser Ga and Gatsi, there reigned in Georgia three goddesses, whose worship was definitely associated with the cult of the Great Mother. The Georgian lowlands lay open to many foreign influences, and as Teshub was identified through the centuries with Kartlos, Armazi and St. George, so the Great Mother was worshipped in Georgia in the names of Itrujani, of Ainina and Danana, and of Aphrodite. Itrujani was Ishtar or Astarte of the Semites. Ainina was Anaitis of the Armenians, Anahit of the Semites; with her name it always conjoined that of Danana, the Nana of the Semites.[2] Aphrodite, the Greek goddess, was introduced after the Roman conquest, as a Mediterranean adjunct to the native cult of the Great Goddess.[3]

The personifications of the Mother Goddess, Astarte, Nana, Anahit and even the Hellenic Aphrodite, were essentially native to Asia and their cult derives from the centuries before the Aryan swarming. Astarte was the wife of the Moon-god and the goddess of fertility and child-birth. Aphrodite, although she came to Georgia from Greece, was the love-goddess of Cyprus and Anatolia and the consort of the Phrygian-Armenian Ares. In the cult of Anahit, ritualistic prostitution occurs and E. Meyer considers the customs associated therewith, which occur also in the Lydian cult, as being non-Semitic. They belong perhaps to the oldest layer of population in Asia Minor.[4]

The memories of a matriarchal way of life which survived into the classic period, and the persistence of the Mother-Goddess cults with their emphasis on the physical and sexual theme of life, proclaim the existence in pre-Aryan Asia of a

[1] "The Bible is full not so much of religious as of racial culture; Christianity [illegible] has taken over these survivals to such an extent that the division of culture into Christian and pre-Christian is scarcely permissible".—Meschaninov, *Zevsy i Sebaka*.

[2] Danana used always with the name Ainina, appears to be formed of the Georgian conjunctive participle *da* + Nana.

[3] Aphrodite had her idol at Mtskheta in the second century A.D., Brosset, *Hist.*, I, i, 77.

[4] Ritualistic prostitution of boys whose gains go to the shrines of Muslim saints, is still practised among the non-Semitic—and only nominally Muslim—Berbers of the Wadi Sôs.

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Caucasus, which are removed—all except the dagger—when entering a church. 793

Although the *paps* are ignorant and mostly illiterate, yet they render great service to their country and their people. They have preserved many objects of great archeological and scientific value and have hindered the spreading of Mahommedan teaching in the country by upholding the Christian faith, although in a distorted and mutilated form. [795]

The *paps* conduct services in the churches, perform wedding and funeral ceremonies, baptize children, kill the sacrificial animals, and see to the punctual observance by the people of the established holidays.

The Svans have numerous holidays created by religious and climatic conditions. Thanks to the high elevation of the country in the Alpine regions of the Caucasus, the cold winter lasts for half a year, and only during the remaining six months is work carried on in the open. But in spite of such a short time, the Svans work only four days a week, and the other three—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—are passed in rest, counting as holidays. On these days no one is allowed to work; he is permitted only to hunt. The people believe that in case of disobedience of this rule, not only the guilty person but his whole community will be severely punished by a pestilence, a bad harvest, hail or other mischief. Therefore, in order to avoid the danger in the summer months of July and August, when the fields are full of ripening grain, every man in the village is obliged to take a public oath by which he solemnly promises to abstain from any kind of work on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Anyone who is found guilty of disobeying this rule is obliged to pay a fine amounting to from one to three rubles. The money is used to cover communal expenses, such as religious festivals, sacrifices, and other items. Besides these three holidays, the Svans are forbidden during the months of May and June to make cheese or to eat any food prepared from milk on Fridays. 796 782

In addition to observing holidays in order to insure a good harvest, the people bring sacrifices to God almost every Sunday during the months of July and August. These public sacrifices are

[1 See Svan religion, see cat. 116, pp 35-37 -- Analyst]

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known among the Svans as *litbkhli*, the procedure of which is as follows: the people of one or two villages unite and buy an ox or a cow and a few sheep, which are killed in the churchyard. After the church service the boiled meat is put in large troughs with short legs, called *ladrula tabag*. Some of the men put the troughs of meat on their shoulders while others are praying together, asking God to send them a good harvest. The prayer is as follows in the Svan language:

"Didab, dideba Gmertsa! didab u apkheda, madl u apkheda; khosha Gerbet, si laneshd nai, ka atkabun nishgvel dabars skarkhal i khola haer; ka ankabun nai i nishgvei kumash knola mazig, eshu knvai didab apkheda."

In English translation the prayer reads:

"Praise, praise God! The praise be given, the thanks be given (to Thee). Omnipotent God, be merciful to us; preserve our fields from hail and bad air; shield us and our herds from the evil disease. Many praises be given to Thee!"

At least one member from every home in the village or villages taking part in the ceremony is obliged to be present at the celebration of the sacrifice.

After the prayer, everyone sits down and the feasting begins. Everything is eaten up and the remaining bones are carefully collected and burned on the spot.

Besides the three weekly holidays, the Svans have many others during the year which diminish still further the number of working days.

The Pshavs observe their principal holidays in the sanctuaries of *Lashris-jvari* and *Thamar-mepe*. Among the Khevsurs the principal annual holiday is celebrated in the month of july and is called *atengena*. Other holidays observed in the sanctuaries are: *Khakhmatis-jvari*, which lasts for two or three days, and *Gudanis-jvari*. In the other sanctuaries a number of holidays is observed annually. Special holidays and religious festivals took place at certain appointed times in the year. The *dekanozis* take care of the exactness of their execution. These holidays are of paramount interest and importance to the people. As we stated at the begin-

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ning of this chapter, religion with the Georgian Highlanders held a sustaining and regulating place in the life of the community. The various and numerous religious rules were observed and executed without any hesitation.

In the celebration of holidays in the leading sanctuaries, not only the natives but their neighbors (even the Mohammedans) take part. Thus, at the festival of the *Lashris-jvari*, at the end of July, known as *lashroba*, or *Lashris-jvaroba*, there are present, besides the Pshavs, Tushes, Khevsurs, Mahommedan Kists, Georgians from Kartli and Kakleti, and others. This fact was observed by the French investigator, Baron de Baye,[41] during the religious celebrations in the monastery of Alaverdi in Kakhetia. The religious festivals in the cathedral of Alaverdi are described in detail by A. L. Zisserman.[42]

The Khevsurs come to these festivals wearing their best clothes and arms, and bring animals for sacrifice. Visitors who have given a special vow to the *Khati* are bare-footed and wear over their garments long white shirts which they take off at the entrance to the enclosure of the sanctuary and throw into a pit especially dug for this purpose. A great number of animals is sacrificed to the *Khati*—hundreds of sheep, goats and oxen are killed. Baron de Baye relates that 750 sheep and two oxen were sacrificed at the celebration in the monastery of Alaverdi in Kakhatia, and that the celebration in the Khevsur sanctuary, *Khakhmatis-jvari*, required the sacrifice of from 500 to 600 sheep and twenty to forty oxen. The blood of the animals is caught in a special wooden vessel. The *dekanozi* who butchers the animals washes his hands in the blood and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the offerer. The pelt and fore part of the animal belong to the *dekanozi* and the hind part to the offerer, who forwards it to the attendants of the *Khati* to use as supply for the general feast which follows the religious ceremonies.

Besides saying prayers and killing the sacrificial animals during religious holidays, the *dekanozis* also hear complaints of various kinds and settle disputes, according to established custom.

[41] Baye: a, 253.
[42] Zisserman: 23-4.

1 Dependents; see cahiers, p21 ff., esp. p29--Analyst

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In general, all these religious celebrations are accompanied by national songs, dances, and among the Pshavs by the shooting of guns to test their marksmanship (*khabakhi*). The Khevsurs also have *khabakhi*, not during religious festivals, but during the ceremonies held in commemoration of the dead. These holidays principally afford an opportunity for excessive eating and drinking enormous quantities of the sacred beer, and usually end in a fight.

Dr. Radde[43] relates that during his visit to Khevsuria he found the whole congregation of a community, including the dignitaries of the sanctuary, after the holiday celebration, dead drunk and stretched out on the "sacred" grounds of the *Khati* in a deep sleep and snoring loudly.

The *Khevis-beri* and the *dekanozis*, in addition to their religious duties, also handle the judicial and administrative affairs of the country. Thus, for example, every year, beginning the 8th of October (if it does not fall on a fast day) until the 10th of November, the Pshav *khevis-beris* take the sacred standard (*drosha*) from one of the principal sanctuaries in Pshavia, the *Khati* of *Lashris-jvari*, and, accompanied by a group of horsemen, visit every village in the country, administering justice and fining the individuals found guilty of disobedience of the regulations of established custom.

The influence of the *khevis-beri*[a] of the sanctuary of *Lashris-jvari* in Pshavia was in times past so great upon all twelve communities forming the Pshav people,[44] that when they had decided to undertake, with the sacred *drosha* in their hands, a war against the neighboring Kists, and the rumor about this spread over the country, every man without exception made haste to the meeting place, which was in the defile of Maturi (*Maturis Khevi*). In two or three days everyone was present at the meeting place, well armed and carrying his own ration of provisions, enough to last for two weeks in expedition. "Woe to the man," writes R. D. Eristov,[45] "who will not present himself under the standard

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[43] Radde: c, 259.
[44] Pshavia, 250-1.
[45] Eristov: a, 137-8.

[a] [i.e., religious personnel; see cat. 116, p 295ff.—Ed.]

C. G. 793 hereditary rights. The priest, called khevis beri "elder of the valley," khutsi "priest" or dek'anozi "dean," pronounced the ceremonial C. G. [782] prayers and sacrificed the sheep and cows offered as victims. The kadagi or dzhvaris C. G. [791] meene "interpreter," "tongue of the dzhvari," a kind of shaman, pronounced the will of the khat'i. The medroshe "standard bearer" or khat'is pekhi "foot of the khat'i" carried the sacred banner (drosha) on festive days. A special functionary attended to the brewing of the sacred beer, a custom borrowed from the C. G. Ossetes. The beer was drunk at the annual • [796] festivals which were attended by all the "serfs" of the khat'i.

In Svanetia the functions of the Khevsur khevis beri were performed by priests not regularly ordained and without any theological training; they were called bap (from Greek C. G. pappas). The numerous ancient churches [771] were neglected and were only used for storing the vessels, vestments and books relating to the divine service; these were jealously C. G. guarded from alienation. Many originally 796 Christian feasts and Saint's days were celebrated with prayers, drinking of home-made brandy and eating of sacrificed animals and fancy bread of different traditional shapes. C. G. Similar rites were observed on the commem- [769] oration days of the dead which were performed at fixed intervals.